

Jakarta,
Oct. 25, '81.

Dear Ms. Pinkerton,

I received the booklet of Lama Govinda and also your letter where you comment that you do not agree with him on a few points. I do not have much to say about this booklet, except that I miss so much the explaining of nāma or rūpa appearing now. In so many of such writings which are being sent to me from different sides all over the world I notice that the Buddha's teaching of the development of the realities which appear through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense and mind-door is sadly lacking, not mentioned, it is only about some concepts. So, since it does not help me to know the present reality I do not spend my energy on such writings.

You write about immortality being possible through perfection, but ← the nāma and rūpa which constitute what we call a person could never become permanent, since they arise because of different factors which condition their arising. What arises at a particular moment did not exist from all eternity, it has a beginning and since it was not from all eternity it will not be eternal, it has to fall away. Nibbana, the reality which is unconditioned, is different, it does not arise and fall away. But we do not become nibbāna in eventually experiencing it. The term universal mind is not helpful.

You suggest that life is a cetasika, jīvitindriya, but not only jīvitindriya. Jīvitindriya is only one cetasika which has a function: during the short moment of citta which arises it 'preserves' the citta and other cetasikas it accompanies and then it falls away with the citta, and then another jīvitindriya arises, we should not take it for my life. It is the same of rūpa-jīvitindriya, it arises in a group or unit of rupas, but only with the rupas of our body, not with dead matter, and it preserves the other rupas it arises together with and then falls away. Life is actually: citta, cetasika and rūpa. And life lasts only as long as a moment; it is in one moment.

When I first came to Thailand I still tried to fit in my background, I had read some philosophical works, existentialism, phenomenology, theological works. It is natural to do so, but then I found out that it was of no use, that it is better to forget all one has learnt before and really listen to the Dhamma and consider it as a new subject, not trying to combine it with what one has studied before. To find out: what is the present reality, how can it be known? What is the meaning of the Buddha's teaching about the six doors? Otherwise we complicate matters so much and we cannot get it. What we see we cannot touch, it only appears through eyes. Did we ever verify this? It should not only be understood in theory. We think we see a flower. Can we really touch what is seen? Do we see a flower? There are

many different moments of seeing, of thinking about concepts. If we throw away our ballast of beautiful words and terms which are not about the reality appearing now, ~~realities are~~, not too complicated to understand, at least in theory. Intellectual understanding can later on the arising of sati which is aware of one reality at a time without ~~there being the need to~~ try to be aware.

To take something for self. What does it mean? Is there still a subtle notion of I am aware, I see? We do not only take our mind and body for self, we also take things outside for self, for something or somebody. We think that they exist, that they stay. The whole wide world we think we see, ← but the only reality which can be seen is the rūpa which is visible object, and it appears through eye-sense which is a tiny rūpa in the eye. We

draw out long stories about what we see, the people, the beautiful mountains in the sunset, but it is only a kind of rūpa and it does not stay. When we close our eyes, no world, no mountains appear. When there is no seeing there are no conditions to ~~'notice' these things~~, but we may still ponder on about what was seen before. To take something for "self" means, not to see things as they are, as different elements, appearing one at a time.

I was giving a talk to a few young Indonesians and they did not see that knowing different elements, knowing that there are different moments of citta made any sense. They found that tiresome, ~~they wondered~~ about the use of it all. I think when one has confidence that it is really understanding which leads to the end of defilements, one sees that it has sense to develop it, even a little, ~~(there is only intellectual understanding)~~, ^{although} in the beginning. One will have a little less problems in life when there is more understanding of what life really is: citta, cetasika and rūpa which are conditioned. Kamma conditions what one experiences through the senses and our reactions towards it are conditioned by our accumulations of good and bad tendencies. If one has not heard about Dhamma one's life is dominated by ignorance. When one has sad experiences one does not understand the cause of it and there is no way of developing more understanding and a wholesome attitude towards one's different experiences. One day there is success, one day failure in life. Situations change all the time. It is good to understand why they change. We read in 'As it was said', the Fours, 109) that the Buddha said:

Monks, there are these four grounds for the arising of craving,

whereby craving, if it does so, arises in a monk. What four?

Because of robes, monks, arises craving in a monk, if it does arise; because of almsfood...because of lodging...because of success or failure in this or that arises craving in a monk. These are the four grounds...

Whoso has craving as his mate
 To age-long wandering is bound.
 He cannot cross samsara's round,
 Existence thus or otherwise.
 Knowing the danger of it all,
 Knowing how craving bears woe,
 Freed from all craving let the monk
 Ungrasping, mindful, wander forth.

It is a short sutta, very compact, very effective. This is what I like. It is helpful, it reminds us of our craving now, and to what it can lead. Is there craving now, even if it is accompanied by indifferent feeling? When we think now, what are the cittas like? When we are not intent on dana, sila or mental development, even when we do not think about very bad things, but just about a chair or a teacup, there is bound to be craving but we do not notice it. We cannot think with neutral cittas, they are either kusala or akusala. My Indonesian audience did not like this, but it is the truth.

I hurry with this letter, because in November we have a visit to Sumatra for ten days and then very soon off to Nepal, until the 20th of December, but If you like to write you are welcome. Only I may not have time to answer before my return. No need to ever apologize, when something is not quite understood. In correspondance one can easily be misunderstood but it does not matter. Correspondence and repetition of the same things is never irritating to me.

With metta,

Nina van Gorkom.